

# Driving the retail brand experience through in-store media



By Cecil Ungerer, issued by Smart Media

1 Aug 2018

In the highly competitive environment of in-store advertising, brands are contesting limited market share. Consumers have become more discerning of what they buy, owing to the availability of product information online. It is therefore imperative to cut through the clutter and create a 360-degree retail experience.



Image credit: Smart Media

Already, brands are shifting their above-the-line (ATL) spend to in-store media opportunities. The importance of visibility at retail outlets that have significant footfall cannot be overstated. Never has the saying 'out of sight, out of mind' been more relevant. If consumers do not see a brand and get the opportunity to experience it for themselves, chances are that they will opt for a competitive product who is providing an experience.

International research indicates that more than a third of consumers rank in-store browsing as their main product discovery activity. This is in stark contrast to five years ago when a quarter of shoppers said television ads were their main source of product discovery. So, even though digital (in the online sense) is important, brands must not ignore the opportunities provided by the retail setting.

## Online meets offline

Even though we are rapidly approaching an era of blended online and retail store experiences, many brands locally are focusing on maximising their return on investing in-store. South Africa is leading the charge on the continent and is on par with what is happening in more developed countries. Granted, the country cannot yet compete with some of the technology-driven platforms being used in the United States and United Kingdom, for example, it is more a case of regulation limitation than an unwillingness to adapt.

Other countries are not yet as strict on data collection as South Africa, so they tend to be more flexible in targeting shoppers, although this is shifting. With the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI), local brands are under scrutiny regarding their use of data collection and are limited in sharing it with third parties.

However, one of the spin-off benefits of online is an increasing expectation from consumers for brands to effectively use digital in-store media. Everything from display screens to on-shelf video and a call to action at the point-of-sale are generally accepted as value-added contributions that help guide the decision-making process. More information easily accessible in the moments that matter contribute to consumer confidence.

## Touching reality

Of course, we are not quite at the stage of combining an online e-commerce shopping experience with in-store personalisation but the touch-points for consumers to engage with at the retail outlet are increasing, along with their versatility.

Having said that, an evolution needs to occur from boring digital displays to ones driving engagement. Doing something impactful and different from competitors is vital, something at the heart of Smart Media's innovations. Fortunately, in-store digital media means that content can be remotely changed to instantly reflect new campaigns and up-to-date messages. This is a far more cost-effective way of driving change than in the past.

While there is still much work to be done to keep attracting consumer attention, South African brands and their associated in-store digital experiences are on the right path.

## ABOUT CECIL UNGERER

Cecil Ungerer is the Chief Sales Officer at in-store advertising innovators Smart Media.

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